

W7hn comments in regard to RM-10781 and the possible elimination of CW as a requirement for obtaining an Amateur Radio license:

Because of the value Amateur Radio ( and CW) provides, as indicated below, and “human learning considerations”, CW should remain as a structural licensing requirement. Re-institute this requirement as a three-step level, 5, 13, and 20 WPM.

Amateur Radio is more than a hobby and catalyst for communication methods through experimentation. Amateur Radio provides service on the local community level as well as county, state, national, and international level. Service, such as, providing street-by-street communications during the many parades, biking events, etc., that take place every week, throughout our country.

It’s a volunteer thing. Eliminates further thinning out of our First-Responders (police and fire) during this era of terrorism. Amateur Radio Operators (ARO) are professionally trained by such organizations as ARES and RACES (Emergency Services organizations).

Continuous Wave (CW) mode of operation is the most reliable method of communications. When all else fails, CW is readable (IF YOU KNOW HOW). During and subsequent to natural disasters, including fire, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc., CW is the prime method to pass information to state and county level emergency services organizations, WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS.

Amateur Radio is home-based, at the city or county emergency services offices, and portable. As a portable operation, whether it be mobile or at a high spot in a flooded-out area, Amateur Radio is “self-contained”, and in some case the only method of communicating.

So, the bottom line is, in the “worst-case-scenario”, Amateur Radio, with CW mode, is the most reliable service available. And, it’s free and will help pull a community (small or large) together.

Having attempted to explain the value of Amateur Radio and the CW mode of operation, what is the case for requiring CW as a part of the licensing process?

CW is not easy to learn. Remember the Cub Scout and Boy Scout steps in growth (badges, etc.), including Morse Code. It is best to learn as soon as possible. It takes a lot of effort and self-discipline to learn Morse Code, and even more, to become proficient at it. CW is learned through repetition. Ask anyone who has attained Extra Class (the top Amateur Radio license level), passing that 20 words-per-minute test wasn’t easy and took many weeks, and in some cases, months of practice to pass the test. CW is like riding a bicycle, you never forget how. And it takes very little time to “get your speed up”, as we say, after not using CW for a while.

In my opinion, the AROs who are for the elimination of CW as a licensing requirement are not seeing the forest because of the trees. Perhaps they feel this will help bring in

more AROs? Perhaps the equipment manufacturers are prodding them? Maybe it's their local friends who cannot seem to motivate themselves in the learning of CW. Perhaps they find it easier to change the law than to pass the test? I'm not sure. Could be all of the above. Regardless, the mere mention of the scenario of a trapped individual inside a sunken vessel, tapping away a message in Morse Code should bring some light into the matter. A prisoner of war, blinking out a message via his eyes and the faint tapping heard in collapsed mine shafts, calling an SOS.

CW is an integral part of Amateur Radio and communication in general. Requiring an individual to demonstrate his or her ability, at a minimum level (5 WPM) is not only beneficial to the individual, but, is part of the "structure" in Amateur Radio that one "can" attain. How do you explain "Espirit de Corps"? I guess through words such as "pride of accomplishment". CW takes effort, and once achieved, it is never lost. Yes, you can quit in the learning process. But it is widely held that "achievement will be rewarded". The ability to establish and maintain communication in worst case conditions is achievable via CW, over any other mode.

Further acknowledgement of achieving in CW, the General Class and Extra Class levels of licensing required 13 and 20 WPM, respectively. Acknowledgement of these achievements are paramount in the motivational processes. There isn't an Amateur Radio Operator alive that, albeit secretly, wishes he or she was more proficient at CW. Again, maintaining "levels of competency" in CW operation is basic in the motivational process.

Requiring three levels of competency, i.e., 5, 13 and 20 WPM is a reasonable program and should be re-instituted in Amateur Radio licensing.